

Myths on Frozen Wings

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Summary: It's been a year since Hiccup's battle with the Red Death. Winter is upon Berk and Hiccup discovers a world filled with ice and shadow where he struggles to not only find the truth behind his mother's death; but also understand that just because he is a dragon trainer, it doesn't mean that he can't have fun every once in awhile. He is a viking of Berk, but also still just a child.

1. Past Truths

A wet hacking cough echoed in the small room. His dragon made a worried noise as he pressed his scaly muzzle into his hand. The hand began to scratch the nose gently, fingernails scraping against the ridges. His brown hair stuck to his sweaty forehead and the breeze from the open window did nothing to ease his fever.

With hazy green eyes, he glanced out the window. Snow littered the ground and piled on top of the roofs on Berk. His first winter since the battle with the Red Death; his first winter since they put the prosthetic limb on him. The cold made his leg hurt. The cold metal sticking into his flesh caused it to throb with pain. Another hacking cough caused him to sit up and double over in pain, both from his chest and leg. Toothless cooed again and placed his claws on the covers.

"I'm alright, bud," Hiccup whispered raspily. He panted to catch his breathe before laying back down. This pain was unbearable, but the worst part of it was the fact that he couldn't seem to get warm. He shivered violently as another cold breeze wafted into his bedroom and pulled the blankets closer to his lithe body, struggling to get warm.

Toothless gave a growl and walked over to his bed of black rock. With a fiery growl, the dragon scorched the rock. The room blazed with heat and Hiccup moaned uncomfortably. The dragon tilted his head confused.

"No..it's fine, bud," Hiccup reassured, grinning at the dragon weakly. "Thanks." He licked his dry lips with his dry tongue and struggled to breathe. Why did he have to get so sick? Watery green eyes stared at the ceiling and began to count the grain in the wood...again.

A bang from downstairs startled him from his counting. He heard his father shush the intruder with an exasperated sigh and he heard the door shut firmly. Toothless let out an irritated growl before lowering his head back down. Hiccup sat up in the bed and tilted his head to the side.

"Stoick!," a voice thundered. There were sounds of grunting, groaning, and the all familiar sound of a peg leg hitting the wooden floor.

"Shhh, keep your voice down, Gobber!" the Viking chief whispered, even though Hiccup could clearly hear it from his bedroom. "He's sleepin'."

"Oh! Sorry," the blacksmith said. "The meetin's about ta start though. Council's gettin' a bit concerned. Barely into winter and the ice on the sea is already a frozen wasteland. Word is tha' Trader Johann won' be comin' because of how quickly the sea froze." A loud thud from downstairs that was quickly followed by a loud crash. "Oops."

Stoick sighed and from the sound, had pinched the bridge of his nose. "What is all this, Gobber?"

"Ah, so glad you asked," Gobber said, a bit too gleefully for Hiccup's taste. "These are ingredient for my Nana's famous stew. Perk Hiccup right up, tha' will!" More rustling came from downstairs. "'Cept for the fish, tha's obviously fer the dragon."

"Isn't that the same stew that destroyed your sense of taste years ago?" his father asked, his voice muffled as if he was covering his mouth with his hands. Hiccup began to worry. If his father didn't trust this, then neither should he.

"Oh, aye, but it came back...fer the most part." Hiccup gulped audibly. Whatever this stew was made of, it sounded dangerous.

The fire sparked downstairs as the two men quieted down. Hiccup heard his father stir the fire and clear his throat. His father inhaled deep as if he was about to tell Gobber something that had been weighing on his mind.

His father hesitated before clearing his throat again. "I'm worried, Gobber," he said, his voice low. Hiccup had to strain to hear him. "What if this is the same sickness that took my wife? What if...what if he starts seeing things that aren't...that aren't there."

A rustling sound came from downstairs. The young teen guessed that Gobber placed a hand on his father's shoulder.

"I know tha' yer worried, Stoick, but I'm sure he's fine," the blacksmith replied, his voice sounding like he was forcing himself to stay cheerful. It was clear that he had been thinking the same thing.

Gobber let out a slight cough before continuing. "Besides, this is Hiccup tha' we're talkin' about. The boy who took down the Red Death. I doubt a little thin' like a cough'll keep tha' boy down. Stubborn as he is. Takes after his father."

Hiccup felt a pang in his chest. They were talking about his mom. Hiccup had been so little when she passed away and his father rarely talked about her. A another shiver ran down his spine though it wasn't caused by the fever. He had always assumed that his mother died from fighting dragons...did she really die of an illness? He had so few memories of her.

His father was talking again. "...not a normal viking though," he had said. The fire hissed and sparked as his father stirred it again. "Even when he was a boy, he was born small. What he did at Helheim's Gate was completely different. Hiccup will never be a strong Viking, his body is weak." His father sighed again. "And now he's got that blasted metal leg. You should have seen his leg last night, Gobber. The night air grew colder and he was tossing in his sleep. I thought it was just simple nightmares but when I took a look at his leg..." His father trailed away.

The burly blacksmith finished his sentence for him. "Startin' ta turn blue, was it?" he asked, his voice soft. It was unusual to hear the normally loud viking sound so somber. "He havin' trouble walkin'?"

Stoick didn't say anything, but seemed to answer Gobber's question. The other viking let out a low whistle.

"The kiss of winter is a terrible thin'," Gobber said. "I almost lost more of my leg that one winter. You'll have to make sure that leg is wrapped properly. He'll lose it if ya don'." The wooden chair groaned as Gobber leaned back and shifted his weight. "The spirit of winter must be desperately lonely this year."

"Don't start that nonsense again, Gobber," his father warned with a serious voice. "This isn't the time for your stories. If we can't get Trader Johann here with herbs and medicine, Hiccup might not live through this winter." Gobber cried out in outrage, causing his father to shush him again.

Hiccup felt as if someone splashed cold water on him. 'Might not live through the winter?' His father...seriously believed that he was going to die. Despair washed over him. His father thought he was going to take the same route as his mother. He ran a cold hand over his face and swung his legs over the side of the bed. The metal limb touched down on the floor. Every movement from that leg sent another wave of agony through his body and it was followed by an irritating buzzing, numbing feeling that took his breath away.

'Small and weak.' His father's words buzzed in his ears, blocking out any other sound. He thought he had proved his father that he was every bit of a viking as Stoick was. He thought that he had quenched those fears and yet...no matter what he did, his father looked down on him.

Hiccup lifted his long white shirt and stared at the missing limb. The edges where the flesh touched the metal were starting to turn blue from the cold. He grit his teeth and stood up, wobbling. The

pain was unbearable. The cold was agitating the wound a lot worse than it had during the summer. Still, with determination, he limped towards the stairs as quietly as he could. He peered through the doorway and down the stairs.

Gobber and Stoick's topic had changed and they were currently discussing food shortages and the threat of their livestock freezing out in their pens. ("Maybe Bucket and Mulch could use fleece to wrap the animals in." "No, that wouldn't work. We need the fleece to make clothing to warm us.") It was a boring topic and yet Hiccup understood that the importance of it.

Gobber scratched his chin absentmindedly, his brow furrowed with worry. "Ya can't keep him locked up in here all winter, Stoick," he said cautiously. The chief viking stilled suddenly.

"I don't know what you're imply-"

"Ya can't hide anythin' from me, Stoick," he said, rubbing his fingers against the stubble. "And ya can't keep him locked up. He's gotta dragon to take care of now."

Stoick interrupted, "He'll tell someone else how to fly Toothless. He's in no condition to fly."

"No one but Hiccup can ride the Night Fury, Stoick," Gobber said, his voice rising. He waved an impatient hook towards the stairs. "And if ya keep him locked up in here, even though it's for his protection, he will never forgive ya."

Stoick's shoulders slumped and he leaned forward, stroking his beard. "I know! I know, Gobber. But it's a risk I'm willing to take." His fingers drummed against his beard. Hiccup swallowed the lump that was in his throat. Keep him locked up because of this...illness?

Gobber shook his head. "He won't see the same thin's yer wife did, Stoick," he said sympathetically. "C'mon, this is Hiccup we're talkin- about! He's too-" The blacksmith froze as the viking cheif rose up dramatically. He towered over Gobber, his nostrils flaring in a rage.

"You can't know that, Gobber," Stoick growled, his breathing shallow.

"Yes...I do."

"No. You. Don't." A thick finger jabbed in Gobber's chest. The chair let out a protesting squeak as Gobber tried to dodge the finger. "My boy...will not die the same way as Valhallarama did."

Hiccup felt the familiar lump in his throat again. His mother's name...it had been so long since his father uttered her name and it was because his father and Gobber were having an arguement about him. Pain blossomed in his chest and he doubled over, coughing harshly into his hand. His chest rumbled from the cough. The pain was starting to become unbearable.

Stoick pulled away from Gobber with a sheepish expression. He rubbed his hands together and averted his gaze. "Hiccup, uh...what are you doing out of bed? You should...uh..." His shoulders slumped and he

turned his back on his son. "I should get to the meeting. Gobber, stay here with Hiccup."

Gobber looked like he was going to argue, but decided against it. He glanced at Hiccup before nodding. "Aye, Stoick." But the chief was already out the door, his horns from his helmet scraping against the wood.

It was awkward to say the least. Gobber had bent over to pick up the sack of items he had brought and Hiccup was standing on the stairs fuming. His father wouldn't even talk to him about his mother. He didn't even tell him how she died. She was his mother. Didn't he have the right to know? And now his father left again without even explaining anything.

Gobber cleared his throat. "Ya gonna stand there all night or are ya gonna warm up by the fire?" he asked, his voice soft with sympathy.

Hiccup desperately wanted to storm up the stairs. He wanted to lay on his bed. He wanted..he just wanted to do something other than sit in front of Gobber. His eyes glanced at the shelf by the door. They landed on the little dragon toy his mother had made for him. "How did she die?" he asked quietly.

Gobber hesitated briefly and picked up the poker. He stirred the fire and shook his head. "Ya dun wan' me ta answer tha', lad," he said.

Hiccup scoffed and shuffled towards the fire. He could feel Gobber's eyes on him. He limped painfully and sat down in front of the fire, staring at the blacksmith through the blazing flames. "Yes, I do! Why won't my father tell me about my mother? Or at least, tell me that she died from some sort of sickness." He tapped his chest with his thin fingers. "The same sickness that might be hurting me. I...I always assumed that Mom died from fighting the dragons or sailing out to Helheim's Gate and now..." He coughed violently again. His outburst had drained his energy. Sweat trickled down his spine and the side of his face.

"Yer mother was very much loved in the village and no one loved her more than Stoick." He reached into the sack and pulled out a small knife. After changing the hook for the knife, he took out some rather grotesque looking tubers. The conversation seemed to be over, but Hiccup wasn't going to hear it.

"She's my mother," Hiccup snapped, his voice going hoarse. "I deserve-"

"You deserve?!" Gobber shouted, shoving the knife towards Hiccup. The boy flinched and lifted his arm. "Ya think tha' this is the way ta get the answers ya want, lad?" The blacksmith's eyes misted over. His shoulders shook briefly before he shook his head. "Ya ever think tha' yer father hasn't told you about yer mother is because he can't, Hiccup?" He fiddled with the half peeled tuber and sighed. "Yer father isn't an emotional man. No one knows tha' better than you or me." With a steady arm, he began to peel the tuber again. The skin landed on the floor with a soft thud.

Hiccup lowered his arm and bit his bottom lip. "She's my mom,

Gobber," he tried again, his voice pleading.

"And she was the love of his life," Gobber answered back. "I can't give ya the answers you need. Perhaps Stoick should have told you sooner, but when has he ever got the time? When yer father came back after being out at sea for months, he returned home to a dead wife and a heart-broken child. Even then, he had ta put all that behind him and run the village. He's the chief, Hiccup. He was runnin' a village tha' was bein' attacked on a daily basis. Between killin' dragons and keepin' you out of trouble, he never had the time and by that time, you had forgotten-" He clamped his mouth shut and shook his head.

Something stirred by the stairs and Hiccup glanced up. Toothless had been roused by the shouting. The black dragon sniffed the air cautiously before his yellow eyes spotted the sack. With a joyful cry, he pounced on top of it; only to find that the first fish he came across was a yellow spotted eel. The night fury let out a shriek of terror and ran behind Hiccup. He cowered behind the small boy and glared at Gobber with distrust.

Gobber let out a laugh. "No offense meant, Toothless," he assured, reaching into the sack with his flesh hand. "I got somethin' fer ya as well. The eel's for Hiccup." He pulled out a nice sized Atlantic cod and tossed it towards the dragon.

Teeth ripped into the fish in mid air. The dragon swallowed the fish whole. He gave the blacksmith an awkward smile. Gobber returned the smile and settled back into his task. Toothless nudged Hiccup and motioned towards the blacksmith. Hiccup dropped his shoulders in defeat.

"Ar..are we good, Gobber?" he asked, tapping his fingers against his knees.

The blacksmith hesitated before giving the boy a small grin. "Aye, lad. We're good."

2. Origins and Muck

Myths on Frozen Wings

Chapter 2

Air escaped through his teeth as the warm leather was wrapped around his aching limb. The heat did a good job chasing away the cold, but now it felt like needles were sticking into his skin. He hissed again. "Gobber...is this really necessary?" he asked. He lifted his leg off the floor and leaned back, trying to get a good look at the dressing.

"Well, if ya wanna lose the rest of tha' leg, then no. The winter spirit's icy grip is nothin' ta laugh about," Gobber said, reaching his hook under the boy's leg. Hiccup placed the leg in the curve, allowing it to rest on the metal. Gobber tightened the ties and patted the boy's leg with affection. "Tha's lookin' dandy, if I do say so meself." He paused for a moment. "In fact, I do say so meself." With a chuckle, he swung Hiccup's legs over into the bed. He winced with sympathy as Hiccup began to cough again and pulled the

blanket up to cover the boy's legs.

"Now, how about some of my Nana's delicious stew?" the blacksmith crowed with obvious delight. He handed the sick teen a steaming bowl of foul glop from the bedside table. He sat down on a stool beside the bed with a huff and waited anxiously for Hiccup's reaction.

Hiccup sniffed delicately at the stew and had to hide a shudder that coursed through his body. The foul acrid stench filled the whole house and yet it still wasn't enough to prepare him being in close proximity of the steaming gunk. He stirred the spoon delicately, struggling to keep his expression neutral. "I thought Dad told you that you wouldn't make this for me?" he asked, desperately seeking an excuse to keep from eating the stew.

The blacksmith chuckled darkly. "Wha' Stoick dun't know won't hurt him, right Hiccup?" he said, tugging on his moustache. He dropped his hand and stood up suddenly. "Gettin' you settled made me ferget my own! I'll be back, Hiccup!" He limped towards the stairs and hurried out of sight. Hiccup waited for a few moments. He heard Gobber getting his own bowl before motioning to Toothless.

"Hey, bud," he whispered raspily. "You hungry?" He held the bowl out for the dragon to eat. The black dragon took a couple of cautious steps towards it, his eyes wide with curiosity. What happened next, Hiccup wasn't prepared.

Toothless let out a low shriek after smelling the bowl and growled at it. He snapped at it and gave Hiccup a rather betrayed look and turned his back on his friend.

"C'mon, bud. It's really good," Hiccup murmured, leaning as far from the bed as he could. Toothless swept his tail across the floor and slammed it down hard with a loud thump. Sensing that he wouldn't be able to change his dragon's mind, he pulled the bowl closer to him. "Yeah, don't blame you, bud." He lifted a spoonful out of the muck and turned it upside down. The glop slowly but surely succumbed to gravity and plopped back into the bowl. He searched for a way to get rid of the stew.

The stairs creaked and Hiccup panicked. He glanced over to the open window beside his bed. It was his only hope. Gobber was coming up the stairs! Sweat trickled down the side of his face as he struggled to reach. The blacksmith had wrapped the blankets too tightly around his legs. His arms weren't long enough. Just before the blacksmith's head popped up, Hiccup lifted his arm to throw with all his might.

"Hiccup! What're ya doin?" Gobber asked, closing the door to his room. Hiccup let out an exasperated groan at being caught before desperately coming up with a lie.

"I was..uh..stretching. My arms. Very sore. You understand," he said quickly and dropped his arm sheepishly. The stew gurgled in the bowl and Hiccup couldn't help but cringe. Gobber wasn't serious about him eating this, right?

The viking let out a loud joyous bark of laughter and plopped down on the stool he was sitting in earlier. The wood groaned from the

weight. "Well, come on. Have a taste. Trust me, ya don't want it ta cool down. Almost impossible to eat when it does. Almost like mud." He stirred his own bowl and ate it, humming with approval. "Brings back such sweet memories of me Nana. Such a sweet woman...when she wasn't liftin' weights or ensnaring dragons wit' her bare hands."

"She...sounds like a wonderful woman," Hiccup muttered dryly. He glanced at Gobber who gave him an encouraging look. The teen lifted the spoon again, steam curling from the spoon like a warning. He blew on the hot stew as slowly as he could before slipping it into his mouth.

Almost immediately, tears of pain came to Hiccup's eyes. He struggled to swallow the foul food. He gagged as his stomach rebelled in protest. It slithered down his throat and Hiccup had to cover his mouth. He let out a muffled groan and nodded at Gobber, who was watching him carefully. It took a couple of tries, but he finally swallowed the muck. He forced himself to smile at the blacksmith.

The dragon let out a mocking growl that sounded like laughter and Hiccup shot him a glare. Toothless grinned at him and settled back down as Gobber's hand scratched the top of his head. The blacksmith grinned and drank from his own bowl, ignoring his spoon. "What did I tell ya, Hiccup? Perk ya right up, right?" he said, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

Hiccup gave him a plain look. "Kinda earthy..." He gagged again and pressed his tiny fist into his chest to keep himself from losing it. "And chewy." He ran his tongue over his teeth in a desperate attempt to get the taste out.

"Oh! Ya like that bit? Tha'd be from the grubs that live in me garden. Hard ta get to, this time of year." Balancing the bowl on his hook, Gobber fished out a slime covered grub and popped it into his mouth. He chewed it carefully and swallowed. "The trick is ta cook em carefully; otherwise, they're poisonous. It's how my Great Uncle Bork died."

Hiccup glanced at the bowl with a panicked expression and set it carefully on the bedside table. "That's...interesting," he said, wiping his hand on his long white tunic with disgust. He shot a mistrustful glance at the bowl and let out a rather nasty cough.

Gobber lifted his bowl again and drank greedily and noisily. He slurped the last of the soup and let out a satisfied burp. He wiped his mouth again and frowned. "Why aren't ya eatin', Hiccup?" he asked, reaching for the abandoned bowl on the table.

Hiccup gasped for breath and wiped his hand on the blanket, cringing at the state of it. "Not really feeling up to eating, Gobber, but thanks," he wheezed, giving Gobber a watery grin. The pain was starting to creep back into his chest. He noticed Gobber's look and reached for the bowl again with a sheepish grin.

"Eat. It'll keep up yer strength," the blacksmith assured, waving his hook towards Hiccup. He dusted off his leggings and placed his bowl on the floor. Toothless glared at the bowl with distrust and shuffled

towards his bed.

He laid down on the black rock and stared at Hiccup, motioning for him to eat as well. He cooed in his throat and licked his lips, trying to encourage the sick teen. Despite the dragon's obvious distaste for the muck, he wanted Hiccup to get better.

Hiccup shifted uncomfortably in the bed and lifted the spoon again. The slop almost touched his lips before a brilliant idea came to mind. Eagerly, he set the bowl down in his lap and tried to give Gobber his interested look. "Hey, Gobber?"

The blacksmith grunted in acknowledgment, picking bits of leftover food from between his teeth.

"What's the winter spirit?" Hiccup asked carefully. "I've never heard of it before." He tried not to seem over-eager as he began to shift towards the opened window. If he could keep Gobber distracted long enough, he might be able to dump the entire bowl outside.

Gobber paused and flicked whatever he picked out of his teeth onto the floor. "I never told ya tha' story?" he asked, narrowing his eyes. He scratched his chin with his metal hook, lost in thought. Hiccup shook his head. "Well, alright then. It's a long story and I dun' feel like repeatin' meself."

The blacksmith cleared his throat. "Well, most people dun know this, but the winter spirit is the one who's responsible for the snowfall and the sea freezin'--"

"Wait, the winter spirit? I thought--" Hiccup grew silent from Gobber's look. He froze in his attempt to get closer to the window.

"Do ya want to hear the story or not?" Gobber asked gruffly, glancing at his hook lazily. Hiccup nodded with such enthusiasm that it brought another coughing fit. "Okay okay, settle down there now. The gods are responsible fer changin' the seasons, yes, but they only provide the canvas. The winter spirit is the one who brings the snow and ice and cold." He grinned at Hiccup, the dying sun glinting off his iron tooth. "They say tha' the winter spirit isn't a god at all."

Hiccup scratched his chest and tilted his head to the side. "Who says that?"

Gobber hummed with frustration and threw his hands up in the air. "Everyone says it. I say it. Does it really matter?"

The young teen tried to suppress his grin. "Sorry. Continue." He inched towards the window until finally he was able to put his arm on the window sill. Success! He tapped his fingers against the cold wood, rubbing the frost off.

Gobber grunted and scratched the side of his face with his hook. "Now..where was I? Ah! Yes, the gods provide the winter spirit a canvas by changin' the season into winter. Now, legend goes that the winter spirit was born as a human wit' unusual powers. He could create ice from his fingertips and freeze water!" The blacksmith held up his flesh hand. "His village was afraid of him. So desperately

afraid that they chased him out when he was just a boy. He was an outcast, kinda like you were before ya had Toothless."

Hiccup stilled a bit, setting the bowl on top of the window sill. Gobber looked pleased with himself that he actually had the sick boy's attention. "Wh..what happened to him?"

"He lived to a fairly old age, alone and lost in the woods," Gobber answered somberly. "He built himself a home; but no matter what he tried, he could not get warm. He was so lost and alone wit' no family to keep the darkness away. The darkness festered inside his heart until finally, his heart couldn't take it anymore."

Hiccup gulped and glanced at Toothless for comfort. Could he have turned into something like the winter spirit without him? The dragon gave a low whine and got off his bed. With his claws scraping against the wooden floor, Toothless placed his head on Hiccup's bed and purred when the boy scratched his muzzle gently.

Gobber watched the scene with a tender smile before continuing his story. His voice got so low that Hiccup had to lean forward to hear it. "When his heart was consumed, the winter spirit was an old man. Bitter...and angry. With hair as white as the snow he created and with skin as blue as the winter sky, he left the woods in hopes of finding a family." Gobber leaned forward even closer. "But his old village was even more afraid of him. They called him a monster and cast him out of the village a second time."

Hiccup swallowed and got as close to Gobber as he dared. "What happened then?" he asked in a quiet voice. He felt Toothless nudge his hand again. Gobber tensed and so did Hiccup. He knew it. Somehow, he knew it. The winter spirit snapped.

"BOOM!" Gobber yelled, causing Hiccup to jump back and yelp in fright. Toothless growled at the blacksmith and shuffled his wings with annoyance.

"The winter spirit's heart broke and with it, an entire ice storm appeared out of nowhere," Gobber said quickly. He was talking faster now and making wild movements with his arms. "The villagers had nowhere to run! Nowhere to hide from the old man's wrath and fury! They froze to their deaths on the very spot they were standing." Gobber sucked in a breath and settled back onto the stool. He scratched his belly idly.

"What happened to the winter spirit?" Hiccup asked hesitantly.

"Well, after the storm was over, the winter spirit realized what he had done. When the villagers denied him a chance of finding a family, he made absolutely sure that no one had a family that day. Still, he was heartbroken and filled with regret. He wailed with grief and began to roam the wilds. For the entire winter season, he moved from village to village in search of a family...all of them meeting the exact same fate as the first one." Gobber shook his head. "Poor man, but he was too dangerous to keep around. His mind was gone. Soon, it came to the point that he didn't even wait for rejection. The moment he showed up to a village; the entire village would freeze."

"All because someone wouldn't give him a chance to show that he

wasn't a bad person?" Hiccup said bitterly. Toothless whined at the back of his throat and jumped up onto the bed. The wood creaked and moaned violently under their combined weight until Toothless settled down.

Gobber gave the dragon a look before rolling his eyes. "Aye, Hiccup. But what would ya have done? Rumors of entire villages freezin' made people suspicious and afraid. His unnatural appearance gave them all the more reason to turn him away." He waved a hand with agitation. "Ah, nevermind. You'll understand when yer older." The blacksmith cleared his throat. "Anyway, it got to the point where the winter spirit gave up. He sat underneath a great big tree and sang to Odin for three days and three nights."

"Sang?" Hiccup asked, arching a brow.

"Aye, lad. He sang his prayers in a loud yet fragile voice. He begged Odin to take the curse away from him. To give him a chance for a home and peace. And on the third night, Odin answered his prayers. With a great flash of light from Thor, Odin appeared to him in the shape of a crow." Gobber deepened his voice. " 'I have heard yer prayers and I will give ya what ya desire,' Odin said, 'but first, ya must complete a task. If ya complete this task, yer crimes against the villages will be erased and ya will ascend to the Golden Hall as a god. You will have a family.' The winter spirit was estatic and agreed to whatever Odin's task was; however, Odin is a wise and powerful god..and the winter spirit's crimes were great, indeed," Gobber said gravally. "The task was that for seven years, the winter spirit must meditate underneath that tree. The animals of the forest were to bring him holly berries to signify each life he had taken."

"When he received the holly berries, he was to plant them into the soil and nurture them with his own blood," Gobber explained as he mimed planting berries. "He was not to eat a single berry nor get up to drink. He had to survive on his own will and sing to the sprouting plants his regrets and apologies for taking the lives of so many people."

Hiccup furrowed his brow. "But that's impossible. Seven years of no food or water and to nurture plants?"

Gobber nodded solemnly. "Aye, but it was Odin's task. And so, for four years, he planted the berries and nurtured them to health, making sure not to freeze or eat a single one. But the pains of hunger grew too much for him. He grew thin and weak and he had to eat something or surely he would have died. He plucked a berry from a plant and popped it into his mouth. The moment he swallowed, the sky thundered with Thor's wrath. Before the man could rectify his mistake, he perished and died."

Hiccup sucked in a breath and turned to look out the window. Storm clouds were gathering and threatening snow. After all that hard work and yet to fail. He knew what that was like. Bitterness welled up in his chest and he coughed into his hand hard. Gobber placed his hand on Hiccup's back.

"Ya alright, lad?" he asked quietly. "Maybe we should stop?"

Hiccup shook his head and placed his head in his hands. It was pounding now. "No, I wanna hear the rest."

Gobber nodded. "Well, since Odin's task was half complete, he became like a god...but not quite. The Golden Hall was forever out of his reach. His body was eaten away by the holly he planted. The winter spirit wandered throughout the lands in search of a family, but no one could see him. No one could hear his pleas for help, and yet he never gave up hope. But when the loneliness gets to be too much, he lashes out with a powerful storm that can freeze seas."

The blacksmith frowned as Hiccup returned to stare out the window. He stammered quickly and motioned to get the boy's attention. "But all was not lost for the winter spirit!" he said, nodding. "See, in his travels, he came across a magic dragon. This dragon was so old that it forgot its name. With its wings, it can create winds so powerful that they knock down an entire village with one flap. Like the winter spirit, the dragon is invisible to anything else. So, the winter spirit and the dragon created an unlikely friendship, much like you and Toothless here."

Toothless gazed at Hiccup and licked the boy's face. Hiccup spluttered and frowned. "It sounds like you made that last part up," he accused. Gobber flailed about and stood up.

"No! It really happened! The winter spirit rides the invisible wind dragon to reach villages across the seas and reach the other villages in hopes of finding more companions," the blacksmith said, trying to convince the boy.

Hiccup hummed in response and glanced down. His bowl was still there! He had forgotten about dumping it out the window. By now, the muck had cooled into a thick sludge. He grimaced and pushed it away from him.

"Ya know, I actually met the winter spirit before," Gobber said slyly. Hiccup turned to look at him.

"Just like you met the Boneknapper?" the boy asked dryly.

Gobber frowned. "Aye! That turned out true, didn't it?" he said, poking Hiccup with his finger. "But really, I was on another holiday with me mother and father. We crossed the seas into another land, only to discover that the seas had frozen while we were spending time in the villages! We could not get home!"

"So, I was out explorin' in the woods when I came across the winter spirit. He knew I was there. He stared at me with his dead eyes and lifted a hand to snatch me and make me into a spirit like him," Gobber said, grinning. "But I was too quick for him. I fought him and barely managed to escape wit' me own life! Just when I was about to get the upper hand, his dragon howled with anguish. The trees bent down under the beast's fury and with one great flap of his wings, he blew me halfway across the forest!" He leaned down close to Hiccup. "Yet when I returned back to the clearing where I first met the winter spirit, he was gone and I never saw him since."

Thunder crashed outside the window and the wind picked up violently. Hiccup let out another frightened yelp as the shutters began to bang against his wall. The bowl shook and clattered against the window sill before a wooden shutter shoved it out the window. It landed with a splat and Hiccup swore that he heard a muffled "HEY!". Toothless

sniffed the air and growled dangerously at the window, exposing his teeth. Something obviously upset the dragon.

The young viking leaned out the window with a confused look. Nothing was out there. The wind picked up again and Hiccup leapt back from the window as a blurry shape flew past the window. Snow drifted into the room before Gobber managed to shut the window.

The blacksmith shook his head. "Tha' was strange," he said, patting the wood gently. "Perhaps the winter spirit was listenin' to my story, eh, Hiccup?" Hiccup said nothing as he tried to peer through the cracks in the wood. "Hiccup?"

"Did you hear that?" the boy asked, reaching up to open the window again. Gobber slapped his hand away. "Hey!"

"Hear what? The wind? I doubt not even our ancestors coulda missed tha' racket," the blacksmith complained. He looked down at Hiccup. "Yer bowl!" He flicked his tongue against the iron tooth. "Eh, not to worry, lad. There's plenty more where that came from."

"No, not the wind...there was something else. I heard a voice and something flew past the window!" Hiccup said, trying to get out of the bed. He froze when Toothless hissed a warning. "Oh c'mon, bud! There's something out there."

Gobber shook his head. "Nuh-uh! Not on yer life, Hiccup. Ya can't just go out there while yer sick like that. Besides, it was probably a bird or a dragon sittin' outside the window," he said, shoving the boy back down on the bed. Toothless huffed with agreement and laid his head on Hiccup's thin chest.

"You just told dad that he couldn't keep me locked up here forever," he complained, glaring at Gobber. He flinched when Gobber's cold hand touched his heated forehead. "And it wasn't either of those things. It sounded like a person.."

"So I did, but I'm not about ta let ya go out there with yer fever. Especially at night. Now stay put, I'll git ya another bowl. And this time, yer gonna eat my stew and yer not going to distract me by askin' me ta tell ya stories, either!" he warned, though his eyes were glittering with mischief.

Hiccup swallowed and gave him an awkward grin. "So..you knew what I was doing..huh?" Toothless snorted against his chest and gave Hiccup a playful look.

"I wasn't born yesterday, lad." The blacksmith reached over and grabbed his own bowl. "Think I'll have another one meself," he added before limping down the stairs.

Hiccup sat up and Toothless whined at having his head moved. The boy scratched his dragon's ear to calm him down. The dragon rumbled as he purred. "I know I saw something out there, bud. And I definitely heard it too."

Gobber limped back up the stairs with two steaming bowls of stew. "Alrigh' Hiccup. Time fer ya to eat."

Hiccup cringed and held his hands up. "Oh Gobber, I would love too,

but I just can't eat another bite. I mean, it's probably not a good idea and it'll just be a mess for you to clean up. I couldn't possibly-" The bowl was shoved into his hands.

"Spoon. In Mouth. Now," the viking warned, sitting back down on the stool.

"Meathead," Hiccup muttered, swirling the stew.

"I heard that!"

Hiccup forced out a chuckle and resigned himself to eat the entire bowl of muck.

3. Mysterious Laughter

Myths on Frozen Wings

Chapter 3 - Mysterious Laughter

_Claws sunk into the freshly fallen snow. The forest was beautiful at night. The moonlight drifted in between the branches and glinted off the icicles hanging from the branches. A pale hand reached out to scratch the black scales beneath him. The night fury purred from the attention and kept walking, his tail sweeping against the snow.

_

Hiccup shifted a bit on Toothless' back and frowned. "Hey, why aren't we flying?"

Toothless ignored him and snorted, steam blowing from his nostrils. A branch cracked and the dragon stilled, his ear flaps laying flat against his head.

"Bud? Toothless? What's wrong?" the teen asked, looking around. The dragon continued to ignore him. "Toothless, what has gotten-WAH!"

Toothless began to run through the woods, his wings pressed flat against his back. Snow flew up into the air. Branches slapped Hiccup, scratching his face and neck. Oddly, it didn't hurt like he thought it would. Toothless kept running through the forest, weaving in and out of the trees.

Behind him, there was laughter. Toothless ran faster as Hiccup gripped the saddle tighter. No matter how fast the dragon ran, the laughter never dimmed. It grew louder and louder. Whatever it was, it didn't sound friendly. It caused the hair on the back of his neck to stand on end. He lowered himself against Toothless' back and closed his eyes. The laughter sounded cruel and malicious.

"Run while you can," the laughter whispered. "Run, little Hiccup. Run."

_Toothless shrieked. His claws dug into the snow as he struggled to stop. There was a loud thud and Hiccup flew from the saddle onto the ground in a helpless heap. He hissed as his back began to throb with pain. He sat up from the ground, snow clinging to his hair. They were in the area where Hiccup first met Toothless. "Toothless, you okay,

bud?" he asked, brushing the snow out of his hair. The dragon merely snarled in response._

The teenager froze and stared at Toothless with astonishment. "Toothless...what's wrong?" he asked hesitantly. He slowly lowered his arms. Metal armor clinked together and he stared at them. His entire body was covered with armor. Leather braces wrapped around his wrist and a shield hung from his right arm. In his left hand, there was a gnarled dagger.

_It was covered in blood. "Toothless..." He stared with horror. Toothless had stab wounds covering his body. The dragon's pupils narrowed with suspicion as he snarled and shrieked at the boy.

_

_"That's my boy!" a proud voice yelled behind him. _

Hiccup glanced up. He was in the kill ring. Vikings with blurred faces pounded against the metal bars. The night fury screeched with terror from the sound and ran as far away from the boy as he could get. His father sat in his great wooden chair with a hammer and shield. "C'mon, boy!" Stoick crowed. "Kill the dragon! Become my son again!"

_Hiccup felt his body rush towards the downed dragon. Blood was everywhere, pooling at the dragon's feet. Toothless was struggling to keep fighting. "No! NO NO NO! Toothless! This isn't me! I swear! This isn't me! Noooooo!" Hiccup screamed. His throat itched. The dagger lifted into the air. _

"Toothless!" he sobbed, trying to fight against his body. "I'm sorry."

The dragon merely roared and pounced on top of the boy. The dagger flew from his hand and skittered across the ground. The vikings started screaming and pounding against the metal bars with more ferocity.

"Hiccup!" a familiar voice screamed. He turned his head. Astrid was standing in the ring as well. Her expression was dark and crazed. "What are you waiting for?! Kill it!"

The boy breathed hard as Toothless dug his claws into the boy's chest. A cough gurgled from his throat. 'Help' he wanted to say. 'Please stop.' Toothless opened his mouth, his fire charging.

_White pointed teeth glittered against the flames from within. Hiccup turned his head away. He couldn't watch this. He refused to watch his best friend hurt him. _

_Nothing happened. Hiccup cracked an eye open. He was standing on the outskirts of the village again. Angry grey clouds formed in the sky and thunder cracked and raged as the wind began to howl. _

Despite all this, there wasn't a single sound. He couldn't hear anything. It was too quiet. Villagers were screaming with horror, and yet he couldn't hear a single sound. He twisted and turned violently, trying to desperately find out what was going on.

Robes shuffled behind him. The only sound that he could hear. Hiccup turned and took a step back. Dead white eyes were staring at him. A long white beard brushed against the snow. A crooked wooden staff planted firmly on the ground as a thin blue hand appeared. Gnarled teeth were exposed in a crooked grin.

All at once, the sound came flooding back to Hiccup. The sound of the thunder and the screaming pounded painfully against his ears. He wanted to clap his hands over his ears to block it out. He couldn't move. His body was frozen still. "The winter spirit," he breathed out.

The spirit's blue hand slowly turned grey and his dead white eyes slowly became silver. White hair changed to black. "Fun, isn't it?" the spirit croaked before the skies unleashed their fury. Somewhere in the distance, a horse brayed.

Hiccup woke up with a jolt, staring at the ceiling. His fever must have spiked while he was sleeping. Dried sweat glued his bangs to his forehead. He sat up. Sometime during the dream, he had fallen on the floor. Toothless' head was hanging from over the side and crooned with sympathy. He nuzzled the boy's forehead.

Green eyes filled with tears as he wrapped his arms around his friend's head. He whimpered pathetically into the warm black scales. "Toothless..I didn't..I'm so sorry," he muttered against his friend's neck. Toothless opened his wings and dropped down on the floor. He wrapped them around the boy's shaking body.

Slowly, but surely, the dream faded from his mind except the lingering fear. He coughed against Toothless' scales and pushed himself up off the floor. His leg screamed in protest. With a loud cry, he flopped back down onto the wood and gripped the leather bound limb. Carefully, he untied it and placed his feet on the floor.

"Oh man, Toothless," he groaned, scratching his bud's ear. Toothless purred and placed his head on the boy's legs. "I had this dream...I was scared. And it was dark." He rubbed his forehead. His stomach gurgled uncomfortably and Hiccup wrapped his arms around his belly.

He glared at the discarded crusty bowl beside his bed. Gobber had 'encouraged' him to eat another one after his first bowl dropped out of the window. "That's the last time I ever eat something made by him," he grumbled, wincing from the pain. He rocked back and forth on the bed. The moonlight peeked between the cracks in the shudders and something glinted from beside his pillow.

Hiccup raised an eyebrow, his stomach ache forgotten. Black sand decorated the bed and pillow; carefully, he pinched some up and rolled it between his fingers. "Where did this come from?" He allowed it to fall into his hand. Without looking, he leaned back and opened the window with his other hand.

Cold air and moonlight spilled into the room. His pillow was covered with tiny particles of black sand. He slowly reached out to touch the dark sand again. With a soft sound, the sand rose from his pillow. "Hey!" Hiccup flung himself back with a start and stared with a slight terrified expression. He stared at Toothless for a moment with his jaw agape.

The sand swirled in the air slowly, twisting and changing its shape. The sand was beautiful and yet, it made Hiccup and Toothless uneasy. The dragon growled and snarled at it, exposing his teeth. The teen absentmindedly patted his friend's nose and frowned. The sand was just floating there above his bed, twisting and turning into vague patterns against the moonlight and casting shadows upon his pillow.

Curiously, Hiccup reached for the black sand. Toothless panted against him and growled a warning, but the boy ignored it. There was something...familiar about the black sand. Just as his fingertips were about to graze across the dancing particles, they shot out the window with lightening speed.

The teen crawled towards the window as fast as he could, but it was too late. The sand was long gone. He coughed violently, the cold air hurting his chest. He stuck his head out of the window, his hands buried in the snow. All was still...and yet there was something out there.

He glanced at the moon and sighed. "Well...this was stupid." He gripped the shutters, intent on closing them. He yawned widely and shook his head. He was still exhausted. Maybe he should-

Movement caught his eye and he leaned back out of the window, green eyes narrowed. Now he knew that he saw something. There! A shape bobbed just over a house before disappearing behind it. Hiccup heard a shriek and a loud thud, followed by a some rather creative cursing. Muffled laughter drifted in the air as the shape flew up in the air...with no dragon underneath it.

It was too far away for Hiccup to be certain, but it looked like...a kid. The blurry shape flickered and then vanished from sight. Hiccup held his breath and leaned out again, struggling to see in the faint moonlight.

A thump on the roof startled him and he glanced up quickly. Sawdust drifted down on his face as a faint tapping sound filled his room. Toothless snarled angrily, his claws digging into the wooden floorboards. "Toothless..shh!" he hissed, placing a hand on his friend's shoulder. Toothless whined in the back of his throat and climbed back onto the bed.

The teen viking stuck his head out from the window, straining his neck to get a glance at whatever was on the roof. A small muffled giggle came from above and then the cracking sound of freezing water. Hiccup glanced over to the side of his house and froze. Frost was growing on the side of his house. Delicate patterns appeared and began to decorate the wood precariously. It took Hiccup's breath away. He climbed up onto the window sill, his head peeking shyly over the rooftop. He grunted with frustration. He could barely see anything. Even though he was this close to whatever it was, all he could see was a blur.

"N...w..tha..w...s fun," the blur chuckled and suddenly turned. Hiccup hissed and ducked his head quickly. Whatever it was...he didn't think it saw him. But what was it? He glanced at Toothless who was still eyeing the ceiling with distrust. He heard another thump and the wind began to blow gently. The shape flew past his window and Hiccup

ducked behind the window sill.

Whatever it was, it was heading for the cove. The teen was breathing hard, which caused another coughing fit. On one hand, he probably should go back to bed. On the other hand...when did he ever chose to do the smart thing? He got out of bed and reached for his leggings. He was losing ground fast.

Toothless growled and shook his head as Hiccup pulled his leggings on. With determination, he scooped up the boy's shoe with his teeth and pulled it out of his reach. He danced around the room, jumping on the floorboards and knocking Hiccup's desk over with a loud clatter. From downstairs, he heard Gobber snort with surprise.

As quietly as he could, he snuck to the staircase and peered down. Gobber had woken up because of the noise. The viking scratched his nose and yawned wildly before closing his eyes again. Hiccup waited with bated breath until a loud snore came from the sleeping blacksmith.

He shot Toothless a glare, who seemed disappointed when his first plan didn't work. "C'mon, Toothless, give it here!" His dragon refused and retreated to the back corner of the room, refusing let go of Hiccup's boot. "Fine, you know what, keep it!"

Clammy fingers gripped his helmet and he shoved it on his head. Whatever that blur was, he was going to find out. Carefully, he walked down the stairs and winced whenever the wood creaked loudly. It was still not enough to wake Gobber up. He heard a snort above him, followed closely by a whine.

Toothless was sitting on the top step, swishing his tail with aggravation. Hiccup brought a finger to his lips. "Shhh!" The dragon snorted as if offended.

"Well? Are you coming with me or not?" Hiccup whispered, keeping an eye on the sleeping Gobber. Toothless shook his head and retreated back into the room, whining for Hiccup to follow him.

The boy knew that Toothless was only looking out for him, but his curiosity got the better of him. He had to know what that thing was...and that he wasn't just seeing things. "Sorry bud," he whispered. "I just gotta know. Stay here, Toothless. I'll be back..probably."

Sneaking out the back door was easy. Stepping in the snow barefoot wasn't. His toes sunk into the white snow. He had to bite his bottom lip to keep from crying out. Cold! He wiggled his toes experimentally before taking another step. The snow was deeper than last night, coming up to his ankle at least. He almost considered going back inside...almost.

Muffled laughter and the sound of wood tapping against the trees caught his attention. He struggled to see in the faint light of the moon. He couldn't see anything. Whatever it was...wait...there! Something reflected the moonlight back at him from deep within the forest. The light was flickering at him. There was something in the forest.

His frozen toes were quickly forgotten; he dashed off into the woods

as fast as he could. His metal leg slipping against the ice and packed snow, but he paid it no mind. Hiccup urged his legs to move faster. The cold air was burning inside his chest, and his heart felt like it was going to burst out of his chest. Puffs of steam escaped his lips and sweat trickled down the back of his neck.

He struggled to hear the laughter over his own labored breaths. The voice whooped and cheered through the trees. He swerved and rushed through the thick foilage. It was hard to run with his long white shirt, but he kept at it. The sleeves flapped uselessly in the wind as branches scratched uselessly at his helmet.

With a cry of pain, he brought his hand to his neck. He slid to a stop and pulled his hand away. A splash of bright red blood was startling against his pale hand. A branch managed to scratch at his exposed neck. He panted heavily and wiped his hand against his shirt. Blood smeared across the white. Great, his father would be wanting to know what happened to his clothing. He turned back. His house was nothing but a flicker of light against the dark foilage.

He took a step back. It was dark...even with the moonlight shining against the fallen snow. The shadows seemed to dance before his eyes. He couldn't hear anything, save for his rapidly beating heart. It was dark. It was cold. And he was scared. He took another step back with his left foot and hissed. The metal on his leg was starting to get cold and sticking to his stump. It was getting painful again. He sucked in a breath through his teeth. A twig snapped. He turned startled, only to have a branch smack him in the eye.

He groaned with pain and slapped at the branch angrily. He closed his right eye and placed his hand against it to stop the throbbing. The branch bobbed uselessly in the air and the viking stilled. "I know this place." The branch was barely hanging onto its tree. All around the base of the tree was broken rocks and scattered branches. Mindlessly, he followed the damage.

He peered over the frozen log, the laughter and the blurred figure forgotten. Fear and shame crept into his mind like ivy. He knew this place. Gingerly, he climbed over the frozen log. Frozen toes stepped carefully against the white snow as he made the short climb down the hill. He placed his hand on the boulder and clenched his fist. The frost scraped off with his fingernails. Using his metal leg, he shuffled through the snow until he found it.

The soggy remains of the rope and bola he used to bring down Toothless. With shaking hands, he picked it up. The iron ball swung in the air as he stared at it. This was the weapon that brought down Toothless. It was the weapon that he fired...that he created..that wounded his best friend. Guilt built up in his chest. He never apologized for hurting him..did he?

He held the rope close to his chest, gripping it with both fists. The rope was ruined and the iron ball had rust over it. He had hurt his dragon with this...just so that his life would get better in Berk. He closed his eyes, allowing his shoulders to sag. He didn't even notice the shadows growing in the forest.

Maniacal laughter caught his attention. He threw the rope down and turned around, his heart pounding against his chest. "I-is someone there?" he called out, his voice echoing in the forest. He took a

step back, staring at the ground. The shadows grew larger and darker. The light from the moon seemed to fade. Laughter echoed in the forest. It was dark and cruel. The laugh was nothing like what he had heard earlier...and yet, it seemed familiar at the same time.

Hiccup swallowed nervously, trying to drown his fear with reasoning. He was sick so it was probably his imagination playing tricks on him. The laugh could be from the wind...or branches scraping against the trees. The laugh rang through the forest again. It was closer than before. Hiccup coughed hard, his legs shaking. He dropped to his knees, his shoulders shaking with fear.

The shadows were creeping closer. Hiccup turned around and started to crawl away. "Toothless," he called out, but to no avail. The dragon hadn't followed him into the woods. He crawled faster until his knee scraped across a hidden rock. He hissed with pain and stood up, glancing over his shoulder. The shadows were following him. He was going to have to run.

As fast as he could, he ran off deeper into the woods. His only thought was to escape the growing shadows. Yet no matter how fast he ran, the laughter seemed to follow him. The hair raising cackles caused him to run faster. He stumbled over rocks and roots, fending off the branches with his arms. It seemed so familiar as the laughter came closer and closer. Hiccup glanced over his shoulder. The shadows had almost reached him.

"Help me!" Hiccup pleaded, casting his eyes towards the moon. "Please...help me! Anyone...someone...Help me!" His chest constricted. His breath shortened and his vision turned fuzzy. His fever had spiked again; he was going to collapse. He glanced out in front of him. He was running straight for a cliff. With a scream, he slid to a stop. His metal foot slipped out over the edge. He scrambled for a hold, digging his nails into the ground. He managed to grab a tree root before he fell over.

The shadows had slowed down and were now creeping towards him, laughing the whole time. He kneeled before them, struggling to get the strength to stand up. He glanced at the moon again and closed his eyes. "Please...help me," he whispered. The shadows covered his hand and he held his breath. The touch was cold and clammy. He instinctively his hands towards his chest to protect himself.

All at once, the laughter and the clammy touch disappeared. Hiccup opened one eye. The shadows were gone and the moonlight was bright once again. He let out a sigh of relief and sagged against a boulder. He was alive. He let out a chuckle out of pure relief. The shadows were gone. His heart started slowing down. He took a deep breath; his body was shaking violently from the scare he had just endured. He leaned his head against the cold rock with a crooked grin.

Movement caught his eye again and he peered over the edge of the cliff. He was at the cove! Excitedly, he stuck his head out as far as he could. He held his breath, hoping to see the young whatever it was that he saw earlier. A moment passed by and he frowned with confusion. He was so sure that the blur was moving to the cove.

He sagged with disappointment against the cold rock, his right leg dangling over the edge of the cliff. "Complete waste of time," he muttered, rubbing the side of his neck. He hissed suddenly and pulled

his hand away. Dried blood was smeared across his pale hand. He clenched his fist and closed his eyes. He had ran through the woods, chasing gods know what, gotten scratched by branches, and he had been chased by shadows.

He placed his hand on his stomach, staring at the moon with a forlorn expression. He didn't even know what he was looking for exactly. He closed his eyes for a moment, shivering in the cold. He should have probably gone back to the house. It would have been safer. His limbs jerked and shuddered from the cold. The pain in his leg went from a sharp pain to a dull throb. After all that energy he put into running away from the shadows, he could feel himself slipping into a dreamless sleep.

Wind brushed across his neck and he sluggishly opened his eyes. He glanced up at the branches in the forest. They weren't moving at all, yet the branches in the cove were swaying with a gentle breeze. Rustling caught his attention. He glanced down in the cove. His green eyes widened and he scrambled lethargically to hide behind a rock. A flickering shadow was floating over the frozen pond.

Hiccup's breath caught in his throat as his heart began to pound. His hands were shaking. He hadn't been seeing things. The figure was just floating there. It kinda looked like it was staring at the moon. The blur shape set down on the ice. A soft crackling sound filled the cove as the blur walked steadily across the ice. Fern-like patterns decorated the top of the pond.

Whatever it was...it was real! He saw it. He hadn't been dreaming or hallucinating from the stew. The blur was talking and the teen strained to hear what was being said. It was like listening to someone speak underwater. But no matter how garbled the voice sounded, Hiccup was sure that the blur was male.

"...winter..sp...rit..huh?"

A pale and freckled hand clenched. It could talk! The blur held out an object, holding it up to the moon. It looked like a sheperd's crook. The spirit thing tapped the end of the staff against a tree. Fern-like patterns immediately grew on the side of the tree. Out of habit, the boy reached for his leather bound book. His hand clasped air. He had forgotten it on his desk! Inwardly, he groaned and rolled his eyes. How could he have forgotten it?

The wind picked up again, catching Hiccup's attention. The shape flickered once before vanishing from the teen's gaze. "No!" Hiccup whispered, his breath forming clouds in front of his face. He forced himself off the ground and took a step closer to the edge. His toes gripped the icy ground as he leaned forward desperate to catch another glimpse of the spirit.

He found it again. This time, it..no he was skating across the ice. He dragged his staff against the lake. The patterns appeared again, swirling and colliding with each other until the entire pond was covered in them. Hiccup couldn't believe his eyes. The view was breathtaking. He took a step with his metal leg...and let out a sharp scream as his leg slipped out from under him.

The spirit froze in his tracks just as the boy scrambled to try and

catch whatever he could to keep himself from falling over the edge. Hiccup struggled helplessly as he dug his fingernails into the frost. "Nononono! Oh Thor, please no!" he cried, his fingertips numbing from the cold. But it didn't matter. The ground soon slipped past his fingers and then he was free falling. The last thing he saw before he closed his eyes was the moon and stars.

CRACK!

Hiccup hit his head on a tree root. His head pounded as his metal helmet fell off. The metal hat fell onto the ice and snow below with a clatter. He felt and heard the wind roar passed him as he faded in and out of consciousness. He couldn't understand what was going on, but it felt like he wasn't falling.

He felt like he was floating. He blinked again as he was placed gently on the cold snow at the bottom of the cove. He could hear someone talking to him. It was muffled and Hiccup struggled to concentrate to hear it again.

"Kid...are...u...o..ay?" The voice garbled. Hiccup closed his eyes.

"No, hey...do't...f..ll asl..p," the voice muttered. Something cold touched his forehead and the boy leaned into the touch. Something dripped off his forehead into the snow beneath him. Something warm and sticky. It took Hiccup a moment to realize that he was bleeding again..and quite badly too. He opened his eyes.

A boy was leaning over him, but there was something strange about him. The teen viking couldn't place his finger on it. The boy before him began to flicker and blurred around the edges. He had hair as white as moonlight and eyes as blue as the winter sky. Hiccup groaned and closed his eyes again.

He was drifting again. The world spun around him. Something...or someone was calling out to him. He moaned in response. They sounded worried. An icy grip touched his shoulder. The boy shook again. The voice spoke louder. Hiccup wanted ignore whoever was talking. He just wanted to sleep.

"K..d...b..rning...p. What...o..I..d?" the voice garbled, shaking him again.

With his head swimming, Hiccup opened his eyes and stared blankly at the flickering spirit. The spirit's face broke out in a grin, bouncing on the balls of his feet.

"Yo..r aw..ke..g..od," he said, placing a hand on the boy's forehead. The cool touch made Hiccup shiver and he let out a soft sigh as he leaned into the hand.

The spirit paused for a moment. "Wa..t..can...u...s..e me?" he asked, leaning close to Hiccup.

Hiccup opened his mouth, yet nothing came out. He couldn't speak. He closed his mouth and took a deep breath, his head pounding from the effort. "W-white," he croaked out, licking his chapped lips. "A..and blue..." The young spirit broke out in a wide grin, flickering even more.

"Y..u s..e me!" the voice garbled. "H..sees..me!"

Hiccup tried to copy the smile, his world was slowly fading. The flickering boy gripped his shoulder and shook him. The movement sent his head reeling with pain. He grimaced and moaned.

"St..y w..th..me, k..d."

Hiccup struggled to focus on the boy's face. His ears started to ring. He lowered his eyes until they focused on the boy's lips. They were moving, but he couldn't hear a sound. What was he saying? He tried to ask him what it was that he was saying, but nothing came out. He couldn't move. Panic settled in.

An ear splitting roar startled them both. The spirit turned to look up at the lip of the cliff before disappearing again. Hiccup glanced up; the roar bringing him back to his senses.

"HICCUP!" A voice boomed. A bulky figure slid off of a black dragon's back. Black dragon? Toothless? The bulky figure patted Toothless on the shoulder before he began the slow climb down the cliffside. "Dun' move, boy! Ah'll be down ta git ya, dunchu worry!" A flash of silver glinted in the moonlight and the sound of metal scraping against the stone caught his attention.

"Gobber!" Hiccup croaked out, his eyes going wide. His chest rose and fell dramatically as he struggled to catch his breath. His fists clenched as his body curled up in the snow. The cold felt like a curse and a blessing at the same time. Snow crunched beside him. A boot and a pegged leg came into his vision.

A large beefy hand gripped his shoulder and lifted him up. Gobber cradled the sick boy in his arm, placing his flesh hand against Hiccup's forehead. "A little worse fer wear, but nothin' serious," he confirmed, scowling at the boy. He shook Hiccup for a moment. "What were ya thinkin, lad?" His voice broke and he wiped some of the blood away from Hiccup's face.

The young viking stared at Gobber's face. The man's features were contorted with pain, grief, and relief. Hiccup glanced away. "I...", he started, but words failed him. He slumped against the viking's large arm and closed his eyes.

Gobber pulled the shivering boy close, keeping him warm. "It's alrigh', Hiccup," Gobber soothed, lifting the boy off of the ground. He staggered a bit before righting himself. "It's alrigh'. Yer safe now. Tha's all that matters." He placed an arm underneath Hiccup and hefted him up against his shoulder.

The boy cradled his head on Gobber's strong shoulder, going limp in the man's arms. How many years had it been since he'd been carried like that? He stared blankly out into the cove and gripped the blacksmith's grimey shirt tightly. "My..My helmet," he muttered.

Gobber turned around with a huff and found the helmet glimmering in the moonlight. With a mighty swoop, he scooped up the helmet with his metal hook. "Got half a mind ta strangle ya," he growled, offering the ninety pound boy his helmet back. Hiccup gave him a small weak

grin and gripped it in his icy hands.

He shivered again and Gobber glanced up at the black dragon. Toothless was pacing and growling anxiously, his yellow eyes narrowing at his best friend.

Hiccup curled into Gobber's body heat. "How...how did.." He struggled to find the right words. His head throbbed again and he hissed in pain.

Gobber forced a chuckle as he stared at the cliffside. "Now there's a rare sigh', indeed," he teased, shifting the boy again. "Young Hiccup can' think of a word ta say?" The boy moaned from the movement and pressed himself harder against the blacksmith's sturdy body. Gobber stopped moving him and sighed. "Toothless woke me up, actually. Smart dragon, ya have. He was goin' insane tryin' ta wake me up. Not an easy feat, lemme remind ya, but he ran to the door and almost ripped it apart tryin' ta git outside," he said, shaking his head.

"I rode him through the woods. I tried callin' ya to git yer attention, but all we heard was yer screamin'. Yer voice was bouncin' all around us and I guess wit' the snow, yer dragon was havin' trouble findin' yer scent. Then ya went quiet. I started ta fear the worse before ya screamed again. We raced to the cove and there you were...lyin on the cold hard ground," he finished, placing his metal hook against the cold stone. He shuffled Hiccup a bit before removing his hook from the wall.

Hiccup hummed in response and closed his eyes again. Toothless had saved his life...again. If it weren't for his dragon... He huffed and gripped his helmet tightly. "Thanks Gobber," he muttered against the blacksmith's shoulder.

Whether Gobber heard him or not, the viking never acknowledged him. He just grumbled to himself as he paced along the cove floor. "Hiccup, I'm gonna have ta letcha go. Make sure ya dun let go. I dun wanna drop you," he said. In response, Hiccup wrapped his arms around Gobber's thick neck. His thin arms barely fit around the blacksmith, but he managed just as Gobber removed his arm from underneath Hiccup.

Hiccup felt the blacksmith shift and slowly, but surely, they scaled the wall together. The boy opened his eyes and glanced out into the cove. The frost patterns were still there. He squinted in the moonlight. Something poked its head out from between the branches. The blur shifted with movement and the young viking could swear that it was waving at him.

He lifted his hand and waved back slightly. He felt foolish sure, but...he was sure that he had just met the winter spirit. And he was sure that he was waving goodbye. He lowered his hand and gripped the back of Gobber's shirt. The only sound in the cove was Gobber's heavy breathing and half-hearted curses.

"Gobber," Hiccup mumbled, trying to keep awake.

"Hm?" the blacksmith responded, just as they reached the top. Toothless reached out and gripped the back of Hiccup's white shirt and dragged him out onto the ground. Gobber grinned and hefted himself over the lip of the cliff and rolled over on his back. His

legs were dangling off the edge of the cliff. "Gettin' too old fer this."

Hiccup leaned against Toothless, too weak to lift himself into the saddle. "We don't have to tell my dad about this, right?" he asked softly.

Gobber breathed heavily, puffs of steam escaping from his mouth. "No...it'll only worry him more," he agreed, sitting up. He brushed the snow off of his shoulders and stood up, staring out into the cove. With a final groan, he picked Hiccup up and carried him out into the woods.

"Good," Hiccup murmured. He heard the wind shift behind him and cracked one eye open. He wasn't sure, but it felt like something was following them. Or someone was following them. Hiccup saw something flicker in the trees before he finally lost consciousness.

End
file.